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SUBJECT: WORLD WATER DAY 2009: BELGIUM

REF: STATE 17303

¶1. (U) Summary: Belgium participated in a few events to observe World Water Day. In Brussels the world record of the longest waiting line for the bathroom was broken, in order to raise public awareness regarding water problems and to promote UNICEF's WaSH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) program. In Antwerp, the city launched its own tap water brand, A-Water, to raise awareness that tap water is a viable alternative to bottled water. Belgian newspapers De Standaard and Gazet van Antwerpen cover WWD events. End Summary.

¶2. The world record of the longest waiting line for the bathroom was broken in Brussels on World Water Day, with 756 people waiting in line to use the bathroom. The initiative was taken by UNICEF Belgium and supported by UNICEF's WaSH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), program, in order to create public awareness about water problems and to recognize that drinkable water is a fundamental right. WaSH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) advocates clean water, sanitation and hygiene for children. The record will appear in the Guinness Book of World Records.

¶3. Among those waiting in the long line were UNICEF-Ambassador and former tennis professional Justine Henin, Belgian Air Component Officer and European Space Agency astronaut Frank de Winne, and Belgian explorer Alain Hubert.

¶4. Meanwhile, the city of Antwerp launched its own brand of water, A-water, which in fact is tap water, as part of its promotion of World Water Day, in order to promote tap water as drinkable water. Special "A-carafes" will soon appear on the market for sale. These carafes are intended to be filled with tap water and to replace plastic water bottles.

¶5. Press reports highlighted comments by the Governor of Antwerp province, Patrick Janssens, that while drinkable water is "a guarantee for us, in other parts of the world it is a scarce resource." A-Water will be promoted at markets and squares of Antwerp. If A-Water proves successful, the city of Antwerp plans to promote lemon syrup for children to make A-lemonade.

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